

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----077644 031708Z /41

O 031612Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5611
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
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CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 01 OF 02 MADRID 08948

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR, SS, SP
SUBJECT: SPANISH VIEWS ON MAURITANIAN DEVELOPMENTS

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH POLITICAL COUNSELOR AUGUST 3, PEDRO LOPEZ AGUIRREBENGOA, MFA DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR NEAR EAST, AFRICAN AND CONTINENTAL ASIAN AFFAIRS SAID THAT MAURITANIAN AMBASSADOR CALLED ON SPANISH KING JULY 31 BASICALLY TO ASK FOR SPANISH SUPPORT FOR MAURITANIAN EFFORTS TO OBTAIN PEACE IN THE SAHARA. DURING THE CALL THE AMBASSADOR ALSO SET UP A VISIT TO SPAIN OF MAURITANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER, WHO WILL ARRIVE HERE LAST WEEK IN AUGUST. (LOPEZ STRESSED THAT VISIT OF FOREIGN MINISTER WAS EXTREMELY CONFIDENTIAL AT THIS STAGE AND SHOULD BE HELD CLOSELY.)

2. CURRENT AIM OF MAURITANIANS IS TO OBTAIN A PEACE
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SETTLEMENT AND THEY ARE WILLING TO PAY ABOUT ANY PRICE TO DO SO, LOPEZ SAID. THEY ARE DETERMINED ON THIS SCORE AND WILL PROCEED WITH OR WITHOUT THE EVENTUAL SUPPORT OF MOROCCO. THE LEADERS OF THE GIRM FEEL THAT HASSAN, WHO IS A VERY INTELLIGENT MAN, MUST UNDERSTAND THAT FOR MAURITANIA WITHDRAWAL FROM THE SAHARA IS A LIFE OR DEATH MATTER AND THAT MOROCCO SIMPLY CANNOT CARRY ON

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE POLISARIO WITHOUT NOUAKCHOTT'S ASSISTANCE. ANY ATTEMPT BY RABAT TO GO IT ALONE EVENTUALLY WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY THREATEN HASSAN'S THRONE, LOPEZ SAID. THE MAURITANIANS FEEL THAT A MODUS VIVENDI CAN BE ACHIEVED WITH THE POLISARIO AND THAT, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF BABA MISKE, ALL THE REST OF THE LEADERSHIP ARE "RECOVERABLE." AT MOST THERE ARE PERHAPS 100 IDEOLOGUES WITHIN THE UPPER RANKS OF THE POLISARIO, ACCORDING TO THE MAURITANIANS. IN ANY CASE, CONCRETE ADVANCES HAVE BEEN MADE IN RECENT WEEKS, LOPEZ POINTED OUT. THE CEASEFIRE IS HOLDING AND THE TRAINS ARE MOVING THROUGH POLISARIO HELD AREAS WITHOUT IMPEDIMENT. OF COURSE, THE POLISARIO ARE BEING PAID FOR EACH TRAIN THAT PASSES SAFELY, LOPEZ ADDED.

3. THE MAIN PROBLEM FOR MAURITANIA, LOPEZ SAID, WAS THE WITHDRAWAL OF MOROCCAN TROOPS FROM THE SAHARAN TERRITORY ADMINISTERED BY THE GIRM. AT PRESENT THE MAURITANIANS ONLY HAVE THREE COMPANIES IN THE AREA, WHILE THE MOROCCANS HAVE A MUCH LARGER FORCE. THE SPANISH HAVE SECRET BUT UNCONFIRMED INFORMATION, LOPEZ SAID, THAT THE MAURITANIANS HAVE ALREADY ASKED THE MOROCCANS TO WITHDRAW THEIR TROOPS FROM THIS AREA AND THAT THE MOROCCANS HAVE FLATLY REFUSED TO DO SO. NEVERTHELESS, IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE MAURITANIANS TO ACHIEVE A MOROCCAN WITHDRAWAL BECAUSE THE STATIONING OF FOREIGN TROOPS ON THEIR TERRITORY

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PRESENTS AN IMPORTANT INTERNAL POLITICAL PROBLEM FOR THEM AND IS THE CORE OF THEIR DIFFICULTIES WITH THE POLISARIO. AT THE SAME TIME THE MAURITANIANS ARE RELUCTANT TO REMOVE THEIR TROOPS FROM THE AREA, THEREBY IN ESSENCE LEAVING THE TERRITORY COMPLETELY IN MOROCCAN HANDS.

4. THE MAURITANIANS HOPE TO BE ABLE TO FIX A CALENDAR FOR SPECIFIC ONWARD NEGOTIATED STEPS BY THE END OF THIS MONTH. AT PRESENT, IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE WHAT THE NEXT STEP WILL BE OR WHAT FORM AN ULTIMATE SOLUTION COULD TAKE. LOPEZ SAID THAT ONE POSSIBILITY WOULD BE TO INTERNATIONALIZE THE PROBLEM AND MAKE THE AREA SOME SORT OF TRUST TERRITORY, BUT IT IS A REAL QUESTION AS TO WHETHER THE UN WOULD BE WILLING TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR IT.

5. IN ORDER TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM IT WILL BE NECESSARY FOR MOROCCO'S FRIENDS TO CONVINCE THE GOM THAT IT MUST HELP FIND A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM THROUGH NEGOTIATION, LOPEZ STATED. ONCE THE TYPE OF THE SOLUTION IS DETERMINED, IT WOULD THEN BE POSSIBLE FOR CERTAIN AFRICAN STATES, SUCH AS SENEGAL, IVORY COAST AND PERHAPS EVEN

LIBYA, TO PLAY A USEFUL ROLE. BUT IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE A LASTING SETTLEMENT, COMPENSATION SHOULD BE FOUND FOR EACH OF THE PARTIES INVOLVED. FOR THE ALGERIANS, IT WOULD BE RESPECT FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION AND THE SETTING UP OF A SAHARAN HOMELAND. THE ALGERIANS HAVE THEIR OWN PROBLEMS WITH THE SAHARAN PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN SOUTHERN ALGERIA AND MIGHT WELL REALLY WANT SOME SORT OF LASTING SETTLEMENT IN THE REGION, LOPEZ SPECULATED

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 MADRID 08948

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THE MOROCCANS WOULD PRESUMABLY BE SATISFIED TO KEEP THE NORTHERN PART OF THE SAHARA AND CONTROL THE PHOSPHATES. HOPEFULLY THEY COULD BE CONVINCED TO GIVE THE SAHRAWIS PART OF THE PROCEEDS FROM THE MINERAL WEALTH AS WELL. FOR THE MAURITANIANS, PEACE IS OVERRIDING. THEIR LONG TERM AIM IS TO MAINTAIN THEIR TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND IN THIS THEY HAVE THE SUPPORT OF FRANCE, WHICH IS VERY IMPORTANT, LOPEZ SAID.

6. IT IS CRUCIAL THAT THE CURRENT MOMENTUM FOR PEACE BE MAINTAINED, LOPEZ STATED. IT IS IN THE INTERESTS OF ALL OF US THAT NO ONE POWER DOMINATE NORTH AFRICA. UNTIL NOW THE MOROCCANS AND ALGERIANS HAVE BEEN FIGHTING THROUGH SURROGATES, I.E., THROUGH THE MAURITANIANS AND THE POLISARIO. IF CURRENT EFFORTS TO REACH A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT ARE NOT SUCCESSFUL, A WAR IN NORTH AFRICA

WILL BE INEVITABLE. BUT NEXT TIME IT WILL BE DIRECTLY
BETWEEN ALGIERS AND RABAT AND ANY SUCH WAR COULD DO IN-
CALCULABLE DAMAGE TO ALL STATES WHO HAVE IMPORTANT
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INTERESTS IN THE REGION. TODMAN

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